

The newly introduced bill, H.R. 3962, is a result of unprecedented participation by three House committees and more than 160 hours dedicated to open hearings, debates, and amendments. The bill and committee amendments have been available for review for more than 3 months, including on our respective Web sites, including my own. I have had more than 19,000 contacts from citizens in my district, each providing important input. I held a number of town hall meetings, including one televised nationally on C-SPAN, and I listened to the residents of the 11th District of Virginia.

I heard from my constituents that they're worried about previous existing medical conditions keeping them from obtaining medical insurance for their children. They're worried about the proposed changes to Medicare and what they might mean to them. I heard that the ever-growing cost of health insurance premiums is forcing some to choose between health care and financial ruin. They were insistent that the cost of whatever health insurance reform is adopted not add to the Federal deficit. And I heard that the potential surtax would be harmful to many families and small businesses, especially in my district.

One of the consistent themes of health insurance reform has been the outlawing of the insurance company practice of denying coverage and forcing families into financial distress as they try to afford treatment for things like childhood cancer, hypertension, asthma, diabetes, and many other conditions. Currently, 45 percent of us who are insured, who have health insurance, have such previous existing conditions. H.R. 3962 will ensure that no one can be denied coverage because of that previous existing condition.

The National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, an organization dedicated to protecting the well-being of American seniors, recently expressed its support for this legislation. The bill will close the doughnut hole for Medicare part D, which currently costs many seniors thousands of dollars out of pocket each year; it will permit Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug costs for recipients; and it will eliminate required deductibles and copayments for preventative screenings for our seniors. The committee noted that H.R. 3962 protects Medicare Advantage recipients from out-of-pocket expenses.

One of the drivers of cost in the current health insurance system is the lack of interstate portability. Individuals are not permitted to purchase out-of-State insurance plans, thereby restricting competition. This bill will allow States to create regional health care choice compacts that will provide for greater choice among insurance providers and lower costs due to increased competition.

One of my primary concerns for health insurance reform was that it not add to the deficit. President Obama

declared that he would not support health care reform that added one dime to the Federal debt. Over the next decade, the Congressional Budget Office has stated that H.R. 3962 will actually reduce the Federal deficit by \$30 billion.

The originally proposed surtax to fund reform troubled me, frankly, and my constituents, and I worked tirelessly along with other freshmen to address that issue. Although my district has the highest median household income in the country, we have many two-income families, as both parents often work in order to afford the high cost of living in our district, child care costs, and the ever-increasing health insurance expenses. The surcharge as proposed would have imposed an undue burden on many small businesses—the economic engine of our economy.

Earlier this summer, I was among a group of freshman Members invited to meet with President Obama, and we expressed our concern on the surcharge. Subsequently, we joined with other freshman Members in a letter to Speaker PELOSI urging her to increase the income threshold. I'm pleased to say that that's been done—to \$500,000 for an individual and \$1 million for a family. That improved level will affect less than three-tenths of 1 percent of Americans and exempts the vast majority of small businesses.

Madam Speaker, we need health insurance reform that is affordable; that maintains the freedom to choose one's doctor and insurance plan; that ends insurance company cherry-picking; and that helps small businesses afford health insurance for their employees. Americans cannot wait any longer. The time for responsible health insurance reform is now.

AMERICA DESERVES BETTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. One of the most sad expressions that we heard in this Congress was by JOHN BOEHNER, the Republican minority leader, March 15, 2009. "As I told my colleagues, we don't have enough votes to legislate. We are not in the majority. They," referring to his Republican colleagues, "ought to get the idea out of their minds that they are legislators. But what they can be is communicators."

Madam Speaker, that is an unfortunate misreading of the role of Members of Congress. It is much too narrow and limited, tragically so.

I spent 11 years in the minority in this Congress, and at times I must confess extraordinary frustration on some of what I thought were decidedly wrongheaded policies like the tragic consequences we are seeing played out on Wall Street and in Iraq today. But in the course of those 11 years, I never stopped looking for ways to work cooperatively to find a majority of people

on both sides of the aisle to make productive change for America.

Some of my proudest moments were as a member of the minority when we were able to take small, bipartisan steps that made a huge impact. For example, the passage of my Water for the Poor Act, that was bipartisan legislation in both the House and the Senate that now enshrines in Federal policy an active effort to provide safe drinking water and sanitation around the world to save lives, while it improves the role and image of Americans abroad.

There has been described by some commentators, including some of my friends on the other side of the aisle, a "take no prisoners" approach. It's disturbing, as one who authored the end-of-life provisions that were hijacked and blatantly lied about to deal with what they called death panels, to see that "take no prisoner" approach in action. Well, we exploded that myth and I'm pleased that we do have strong, voluntary end-of-life provisions in the bill to protect the wishes of American families about how their families would be dealt with.

But one of the myths is that this "take no prisoners" attitude is just directed towards the Democrats because the consequence of a "take no prisoner" attitude might be, if they're successful, destroying our efforts at health care reform, where we have come further than any time in our history. In that case, the prisoners will be the American public that will be sentenced to continuing a process where we have millions uninsured and others who are not protected by the insurance which they are paying for.

Sadly, "take no prisoners" has actually affected the minority itself, because this attitude of being dismissive of a constructive role of legislation, being dismissive of the truth, actually has resulted in holding them hostage to the lowest common denominator—the TEA Party, tin-foil-hat people who have a paranoid, limited view of what America is and can be.

In the end, Madam Speaker, America deserves better. I think it will get better. But I sincerely hope that Republicans choose to stop being communicators, especially misrepresenting what we have brought before the American people, roll up their sleeves, and work with us constructively to reform America's broken health care system with costs out of control and coverage too limited.

Madam Speaker, together, we can make progress. Together, we can legislate and work on things where there is a common vision and a common goal. Together, we can make our government work better and our communities more livable and our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair

declares the House in recess until 9 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 15 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 9 a.m. today.

□ 0900

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WELCH) at 9 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord, You show mercy to all, and You despise nothing You have created. Since You know us through and through, You forgive the sins of Your people, because You alone can draw goodness out of anyone or anything, at any time.

You provide Your people with time so that they may change their course of action and return to You with all their hearts, for You alone are the Lord. You alone are ever faithful, Almighty God, both now and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

After consultation among the Speaker and the majority and minority leaders, and with their consent, the Chair announces that, when the two Houses meet in joint meeting to hear an address by Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, only the doors immediately opposite the Speaker and those immediately to her left and right will be open.

No one will be allowed on the floor of the House who does not have the privilege of the floor of the House. Due to the large attendance that is anticipated, the rule regarding the privilege of the floor must be strictly enforced. Children of Members will not be permitted on the floor. The cooperation of all Members is requested.

The practice of reserving seats prior to the joint meeting by placard will

not be allowed. Members may reserve their seats by physical presence only following the security sweep of the Chamber.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of Thursday, October 29, 2009, the House stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 2 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

During the recess, beginning at 10:23 a.m., the following proceedings were had:

JOINT MEETING TO HEAR AN ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY DR. ANGELA MERKEL, CHANCELLOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

The Speaker of the House presided.

The Majority Floor Services Chief, Mr. Barry Sullivan, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER);

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN);

The gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON);

The gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA);

The gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO);

The gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN);

The gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER);

The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT);

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN);

The gentleman from New York (Mr. MCMAHON);

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER);

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR);

The gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE);

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER);

The gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS);

The gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY);

The gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER);

The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN);

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON); and

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE).

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, into the House Chamber:

The Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID);
The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN);

The Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY);

The Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY);

The Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL);

The Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL);
The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. AL-EXANDER);

The Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI);

The Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN); and

The Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE).

The Majority Floor Services Chief announced the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Roble Olhaye, Ambassador from the Republic of Djibouti.

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Majority Floor Services Chief announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The Members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 10 o'clock and 43 minutes a.m., the Majority Floor Services Chief announced Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and stood at the Clerk's desk.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The SPEAKER. Members of Congress, I have the high privilege and the distinct honor of presenting to you Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

(The following address was delivered in German, with a simultaneous translation in English.)

Chancellor MERKEL. Madam Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished Members of Congress:

Thank you for the great honor and privilege to address you today, shortly before the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. I am the second German Chancellor on whom this great honor is bestowed. Konrad Adenauer was the first when, in 1957, he addressed both Houses of Congress, albeit one after the other.